

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): Beads of expandable vinylaromatic polymers consisting of

- a) a matrix obtained by polymerizing 50-100% by weight of one or more vinylaromatic monomers and 0-50% by weight of at least one copolymerizable monomer;
- b) 1-10% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymer (a), of an expanding agent englobed in the polymeric matrix,
- c) 2 ppm-2% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymer (a), of an anti-lumping additive, distributed only on the surface of the beads,

wherein the anti-lumping additive is a least one selected from the group consisting of an oxide of a group IB metal; an oxide of a group VIIIB metal; and a mixture consisting of one or more of an oxide of a group IB metal, an oxide of a group IIB metal and an oxide of a group VIIIB metal, and an ester of a
~~oxides of metals of groups IB and VIIIB or from mixtures consisting of oxides of metals of groups IB, IIB and VIIIB and esters of C₈-C₂₅ fatty acid acids with the same metals.~~

Claim 2 (Original): The beads of expandable vinylaromatic polymers according to claim 1, having an average molecular weight Mw ranging from 50,000 to 250,000.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The beads of expandable vinylaromatic polymers according to claim 1, wherein the beads are substantially spherical with an average diameter ranging from 0.2 to 2 mm.

Claim 4 (Canceled).

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of beads of expandable vinylaromatic polymers which comprises comprising:

- polymerizing 50-100% by weight of one or more vinylaromatic monomers and 0-50% by weight of at least one co-polymerizable monomer;

- englobing an expanding agent in the polymeric matrix; and

- distributing only on the surface of the beads obtained 2 ppm-2% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymer, of an anti-lumping additive,

wherein the anti-lumping additive is a least one selected from the group consisting of an oxide of a group IB metal; an oxide of a group VIIIB metal; and a mixture consisting of one or more of an oxide of a group IB metal, an oxide of a group IIB metal and an oxide of a group VIIIB metal, and an ester of a ~~oxides of metals of groups IB and VIIIB or from mixtures consisting of oxides of metals of groups IB, IIB and VIIIB and esters of C₈-C₂₅ fatty acid acids with the same metals,~~ to form the beads of the expandable vinylaromatic polymers,

wherein the beads consist of

- a) a matrix obtained by the polymerizing of the vinylaromatic monomers and the copolymerizable monomer;

- b) 1-10% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymer (a), of the expanding agent englobed in the matrix, and

- c) 2 ppm-2% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymer (a), of the anti-lumping additive, distributed only on the surface of the beads.

Claim 6 (Original): The process according to claim 5, wherein the polymerization is carried out in aqueous suspension or in continuous mass.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 5, wherein the polymerization is carried out in suspension in the presence of a suspending agent, an initiating system and an expanding system.

Claim 8 (Original): The process according to claim 7, wherein the expanding system consists of liquid substances with a boiling point ranging from 10 to 100°C.

Claim 9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 5, wherein the anti-lumping additive is a powder with an average particle-size ranging from 0.1 to 50 µm.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): Beads of one or more expandable or vinylaromatic polymers, comprising:

a) a polymeric matrix obtained by polymerizing a mixture comprising 50-100% by weight of one or more vinylaromatic monomers and 0-50% by weight of at least one copolymerizable monomer;

b) 1-10% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymeric matrix a), of an expanding agent englobed in the polymeric matrix; and

c) 2 ppm-2% by weight, calculated with respect to the polymer matrix a), of at least one oxide of a metal selected from the group consisting of a metal of group IB and a metal of group VIIIB.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The beads according to claim 11, wherein the expandable vinylaromatic polymers have an average molecular weight M_w of from 50,000 to 250,000.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The beads according to claim 11, wherein the beads are substantially spherical and have an average diameter of from 0.2 to 2 mm.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The beads according to claim 11, further comprising

one or more fillers of an athermanous material in an amount of from 0.05 to 25% by weight.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn): The beads according to claim 1, further comprising an amine-containing coating present on the surface of the bead between the surface of the bead and the anti-lumping additive.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The beads according to claim 11, wherein the anti-lumping additive is at least one selected from the group consisting of Fe_2O_3 and CuO .

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): A process for preparing the beads according to claim 11, comprising:

polymerizing a mixture comprising from 50-100% by weight of one or more vinyl aromatic monomers and from 0-50% by weight of at least one copolymerizable monomer to form the polymeric matrix;

englobing the expanding agent in the polymeric matrix; and

distributing the anti-lumping additive on the surface of the beads.

Claim 18 (Withdrawn): The process according to claim 17, further comprising:
coating the beads with a liquid antistatic agent selected from the group consisting of an amine, a tertiary alkyl amine, and an ethylene oxide-propylene oxide copolymer before distributing the anti-lumping additive on the surface of the beads.

Claim 19 (Withdrawn): The beads according to claim 15, consisting of the matrix, the expanding agent, the anti-lumping additive, and the anti-static agent.

Claim 20 (New): The beads of expandable vinylaromatic polymers according to claim 1, wherein the anti-lumping additive includes Fe_2O_3 .

Claim 21 (New): The process according to claim 5, wherein the anti-lumping additive includes Fe_2O_3 .

Claim 22 (New): The beads of expandable vinylaromatic polymers according to claim 11, wherein the anti-lumping additive includes Fe_2O_3 .